

REVIEWS

PSYCHIATRY. By E. W. Anderson. (Pp. vii + 296. 16s.) Concise Medical Textbook Series. London: Baillière, Tindall & Cox, 1964.

THIS book is one of the first volumes to be published in a new series for students and entitled Concise Medical Textbooks. It would appear that these are designed to replace the Students' Aids Series which, for many years, has been so popular with undergraduates. The format is much more attractive than that of its predecessor, "Aids to Psychiatry," and both print and page have been enlarged. This new book is addressed not only to medical students but to a wider audience which includes psychiatric social workers and postgraduates in training for a Diploma in Psychological Medicine.

Much of the text shows little change from that found in "Aids to Psychiatry" but a separate chapter which has now been devoted to "Drug Treatment in Psychiatry" gives a succinct and balanced appraisal of this aspect of therapy. The various clinical syndromes are well described but the reviewer feels that, in its current form, the chapter on psychopathology might make laborious reading for the undergraduate embarking on his psychiatric studies. No mention is made of the Mental Health Act (Northern Ireland) 1961, although English legislation is clearly outlined. However, this book succeeds in presenting a concise account of current practical psychiatry and its very modest price is an asset.

S. J. K.

OBSTETRICS. By J. M. Holmes, M.D., B.S.(Lond.), M.R.C.O.G. (Pp. 256; figs. 37. 15s.) Concise Medical Textbook Series. London: Baillière, Tindall & Cox, 1964.

THIS is one of a new series of Concise Medical Textbooks aimed at "placing in the hands of the student books which will help him to acquire a grasp of his subject." In his preface the author, remarking that a concise textbook cannot be complete, claims that he has written a dogmatic summary which includes many recent advances in obstetric practice. This is a very fair description of the clinical sections which make up more than five-sixths of this clearly written and easily read little book. It is a pity, however, that the Imperial system has been used throughout when nowadays medical students are being encouraged to use the metric. The use of X-rays is advocated during pregnancy without any mention of the small but definite risk to the foetus attendant upon this. The tenderness of pyelonephritis is said to occur in the costovertebral instead of in the renal angle and not many will agree that potassium citrate by mouth plays any part in the modern treatment of this condition, nor myomectomy in the management of red degeneration in a fibroid during pregnancy even "on rare occasions."

In future editions it would be worthwhile considering omitting the chapters on anatomy and physiology which are less satisfactory than the clinical sections and contain some inaccuracies, and expanding the rest of the book to include fuller treatment of the sections on, for example, placenta praevia and the medical and surgical complications of pregnancy. The book is attractively bound and the type is pleasing, but the illustrations unfortunately leave a great deal to be desired—as is so often the case in British textbooks today.

In spite of these deficiencies the author and publishers have attained their aims to a considerable degree and the book is likely to find favour in the hands of medical students approaching obstetrics for the first time.

J. H. M. P.

DERMATOLOGY. By R. M. B. Mackenna and E. L. Cohen. (Pp. 279. 17s. 6d.) Concise Medical Textbook Series. London: Baillière, Tindall & Cox, 1964.

THIS is our old friend, "Aids to Dermatology" by the same authors, in a new disguise with an improved and more modern cover design and with a somewhat larger page size, but with essentially the same volume of material and, indeed, often the same text as in the older editions of Aids. Once again illustrations have been reduced to the absolute minimum and the authors have confined themselves to a photograph showing the skin

in section and to line drawings of the more common parasites. There is new material concerning the use of griseofulvin in the treatment of fungus diseases, but few alterations in the description and classification of these diseases.

The authors write in a most readable fashion and the layout of the booklet is in well known form with headings for each of the main section of each disease, for example, definition, pathogenesis, pathology, etc.

A little more careful proof-reading would have helped the "new" book. On page 182 the words "the efflorescences of the eruption are frequently associated with increased nervous tensions and anxiety" are followed in the very next line by "in a psoriatic subject, efflorescences of the eruption are frequently associated with increased nervous tensions and anxiety."

One would like to have seen more frankness in those remarks which apply to aetiology and pathogenesis. Surely the time has come when if the aetiology is unknown we should say so, and particularly is this true when dealing with undergraduate students. Such sentences as "the cause is unknown; a virus has been suggested" (in the section of lichen planus) is decidedly unhelpful.

The authors in their preface say "many regard dermatology as a static subject, but this is far from being true . . ." but they themselves could well have given a few more examples of the dynamics of dermatology in this book. The section on the aetiology of alopecia areata serves as an example. Here we are told that worry, eye strain, septic foci, "tropho-neurosis" and endocrine dysfunction are all possible explanations. Under treatment of alopecia areata we are advised to examine the eyes, ears and teeth and improve the general health and later A.C.T.H. "may be of benefit" but "relapse may occur." The treatment of alopecia areata with local irritants is given in detail and it is stated that thorium X gives "excellent results" (very few would agree with this today),

Nevertheless, there is an astonishing amount of material in this little book and, at 17s. 6d., it will no doubt continue to have the worldwide success of its predecessors. J. M. B.

HANDBOOK OF OPERATIVE UROLOGICAL SURGERY. By John Swinney and Douglas P. Hammersley. (Pp. vii + 271; figs. 259. 55s.) Edinburgh and London: E. & S. Livingstone Ltd., 1963.

THIS admirable textbook describes the common urological operations performed by Mr. Swinney at the Newcastle-upon-Tyne General Hospital. He has described the operations that he has found valuable and reliable.

The book is divided into seven sections, commencing with the kidney, and then dealing with operations in the ureter and bladder, followed by the urethra and the genital organs.

The operations are described with great clarity, and the essential steps demonstrated by means of illustrations. The book is very suitable for the senior student, but is especially suitable for the surgical registrar interested in urological work, as well as for the general surgeon who also does urological surgery.

The book is well illustrated, and is highly recommended.

J. M. M.

DEVELOPMENTAL DYSLEXIA. By Macdonald Critchley, M.D., F.R.C.P. (Pp. xi + 104; figs. 36. 25s.) London: William Heinemann Medical Books, 1964.

THE poor reader in society has stimulated great interest and controversy. Educationalists, psychologists, sociologists have long held rigid opinions on the cause and these at times have been at variance with the medical viewpoint. The central problem is whether there is within the illiterate population a group of cases which are neither psychologically determined nor yet a fault of mental backwardness and which could be considered a specific disturbance in the symbolic meaning of visual language. Neurologists have always favoured this while the non-medical professions have tended to consider all cases as being a manifestation of general intellectual subnormality—"The mildest grade of imbecility."